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INTRODUCTION

101 THE people whose lives are described in this book are the
131 Melanesian inhabitants of the island of Buka and of the north coast of the island of Bougainville, separated by the narrow strip of turbulent water known as Buka Passage. These two, the most north-westerly of the Solomon Islands, have since 1920 formed part of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. The locality was chosen as likely to afford me an opportunity of studying native life under relatively primitive conditions.

114 On September 28, 1929, I began work at Petats, a coral islet off
177 the west coast of Buka, which had been recommended as a suitable starting-point for my inquiry. I soon realized, however, that the people of Buka as a whole, and of Petats in particular, had already come under the influence of the white man to such an extent that much of their original mode of life had disappeared. As they
● [198] themselves put it, speaking in pidgin-English: 'White man he capsize altogether something belong before.' It is true that the investigation of an erstwhile savage society is a most important part of present-day anthropology, but I had been instructed to study a primitive community. A journey round Buka proved that little was to be gained by moving to any of the villages there. Meanwhile, I had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Hadden, the daughter of the anthropologist R. Parkinson, author of *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*. At her suggestion I accepted an invitation from Pinari, the local headman, to come and stay at Kurtatchi, a village on the north coast of Bougainville, about ten miles east of Buka Passage. After a preliminary visit, I settled there on January 1, 1930. Owing partly to its being less easily accessible, and partly to the conservatism of its people, I found at Kurtatchi conditions approximating somewhat more closely to what they had been before the coming of the white man, though, as will be evident from my report, far from being unchanged. The bulk of my information was obtained at this village, which was my home for nine months; the villages of Tabut and Ruri, on either side of it, providing valuable additional and corroborative data.

114 The following somewhat personal notes on the manner in which I lived and worked are given in order to make quite clear the

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circumstances under which the material in this report was collected. 114

On arriving at Petats I started immediately to work on the language, and was making good headway when I decided to move to Kurtatchi. Here I had to begin afresh upon a new dialect. The vocabulary differs considerably from that of Petats, but as the syntax is similar, my previous work was not altogether wasted. Beginning by making use of pidgin-English, with which all the younger men (but not the women nor the older people of either sex) were familiar, I gradually substituted the native dialect for conversational and working purposes, and eventually was able to use it with some degree of freedom in the give and take of everyday life, and for writing down what my informants told me. For this purpose I used a simplified form of the International Phonetic System. When taking down stories, and anything else that required to be recorded verbatim, I had little difficulty in getting the narrators to speak at a pace which I was able to follow with my pen. 114 197 126 [118]

None of these people had any acquaintance with standard English, pidgin-English being the universal medium of converse between them and the whites. As interpreters, I chose carefully the men who possessed the best knowledge of pidgin-English. One man, Matarĕ (whose photograph appears in Pl. 11), in particular was very useful to me, being interested, careful, and more articulate than the others. With him, and some others, I went over the greater part of my material (omitting, of course, information given to me in confidence), interlining my note-books with a pidgin-English translation, in the course of which I was able to get unfamiliar words explained to me, thus often opening up some new line of inquiry. Unfortunately for me, the local dialects differ almost from village to village, so I was obliged to fall back on pidgin-English as a lingua franca whenever I worked outside a limited area. In such cases I had to content myself with taking down in dialect the key words only. 198 124 126 [197]

At Petats I lived in the rest-house which is maintained for the use of Government officials. At Kurtatchi I had a house built specially for me. I was given a site in the new part of the village, facing two lines of huts. There the villagers, working under my direction, constructed a house and outbuildings which proved admirably suited to my needs, with a good verandah, from which I could watch what was going on in the village while I wrote up 123

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834 would repay fuller investigation from the psychological standpoint
181 than I was able to give it.

882 The boys wearing the *upi* are not exempt from taking their
868 share in the work of the village. They are encouraged by the older men to share in their daily round. They help in cutting the bush to prepare the ground for planting taro, though they are not allowed in the taro garden while women are working there. They are taken fishing, both ordinary reef-fishing and bonito-fishing. They are taught the technique of canoe-making, house-building, and so on. They join in the ceremonial dances, going round in wheel-formation with the men.

883 As well as the activities which they share with the adult men,
571 they have also their own. Parties of them were always going off into the bush on their own, either to hunt for small creatures to cook for themselves, or just to wander about. Not wanting to be always with their elders, and debarred from playing with girls of their own age, they have every inducement to develop an organized 'gang' among themselves. There is a word, *tobarupi*, which means 'all the boys' (in a given village). There seems to be a considerable amount of solidarity in their life together, and I do not think that any boy wearing the *upi* was deliberately made to feel an outsider.
[732] One of the boys at Kurtatchi was deaf and dumb, but he had been granted the privilege of putting on the *upi*, and was accepted by the others without distinction. They used to laugh at him sometimes, but it was always in friendly fashion, and they never left
[198] him out of their pursuits, having evolved a system of signs whereby he could be made to understand what they wanted to convey to him.

882 In times past, whatever secret chafing may have gone on in the
178 privacy of the *tobar*, the boys seem to have accepted the restrictions under which they laboured with a good grace, and to have felt that they were compensated by the importance conferred upon them. But at the time of my visit signs of resentment at the irksomeness of the taboos might be detected among the older boys. They were supported in their rebellion by the Missions and the employers of labour, and some of the younger men shared their point of view, though every one was careful not to voice his unorthodox views too loudly, in case of punishment either by the *wer* or by the *tamaun*. One or two men with young sons told me, in private, that they were not going to let their children put on the *upi* when

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There are a number of variants of this procedure, current in different villages, but all having for their aim 'to make the dogs cross'. At the village of Tung I saw the lower jaw of a large marine creature with sharp teeth hanging on the wall of the men's house. I was told it was intended to be crushed up and mixed with the dog's food, so that they would 'get very cross and hunt well'. Another method involves putting special food for the dogs in an ants' nest, so that when the dog tries to eat it the ants bite him, 'then he gets very cross and is ready to chase pigs'. The word I have translated 'cross' is used of people in a bad temper, but I suppose in this case it means 'fierce'.

There is also a 'medicine' intended to act in the opposite way, i.e. to spoil a dog for hunting:

If you want a dog and the owner won't give it to you, get some of the dog's excrement, put it in a coco-nut shell and bury it. Over the place where it is buried plant some of the plant called *wanis* (this word is used of several different plants, most of which seem to be varieties of *Eleusine*). When this grows tall the dog will not be good at hunting any more.

Opossum hunting

[The Cuscus opossum, or phalanger (Pl. 41*b*).]

Opossum are hunted chiefly by boys and the younger men. The method is to peer about in the foliage till one is seen curled up on a branch, or to track the animal to its hole, and then to climb the tree and pull it out (Fig. 10). If it has gone in so far that it cannot be reached, the tree will often be felled. Quite large trees are sometimes felled for the sake of one opossum, but as most of them are soft-timbered varieties, this task is not as arduous as it might appear. The boys like to go hunting for opossum at night, using torches made of coco-nut palm leaves with their fronds folded into a bunch and tied together. I used to be invited to accompany the party, with the proviso that I should bring my 'shoot-lamp' (pidgin-English for 'electric torch'). The light not only serves to locate the opossum, but also to dazzle it, when it is likely to fall down and be seized by the dogs. The hunters try to drive the animals by shouts and by making a noise with a leaf adjusted between finger and thumb, which is then smacked sharply with the other hand.

There are various 'medicines' which are used to aid the hunter,

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contents of one of my note-books, picked at random, shows that out of 49 stories, old or elderly men were responsible for 12, old or elderly women for 10, young men for 11, young women for 14, a boy and a girl for one each.

At the outset of my work I took down the stories in Pidgin English, with which many of the younger men were acquainted as they had worked as indentured labourers on coconut plantations. From these I chose, as carefully as I could, those who seemed best suited to act as interpreters for the older men, the stories being translated sentence by sentence.

The dialect spoken on the island of Petats has been reduced to writing by Rev. A. H. Cropp, who has for many years been working on Buka as Methodist Missionary.[1] He used our own alphabet, adapted by means of certain conventions to fit the sounds of the language. Some of the younger men have learnt to write under his tuition. One of these wrote out for me, in the Petats dialect, several stories as told by his father, an old man of considerable standing. Except for these, the stories I collected on Petats and Buka were all taken down in Pidgin English.

During my stay at Kurtatchi, however, I accustomed myself to the use of the native dialect, on which no previous work has been done. I employed a simplified form of the International Phonetic System, but without attempting to record the finer shades of pronunciation, in which there is considerable individual variation. The natives soon learnt to talk slowly enough for me to write from their dictation, and at the end of a story I read out what I had written to the assembled company, who were not slow to correct me when I made a mistake. Then, or subsequently, I went over the text again, sentence by sentence, with one of the natives who spoke good Pidgin English, writing down the Pidgin

[1] Mr. Cropp very kindly allowed me to make use of his MS. dictionary and grammatical notes on the Petats dialect, which have been of great assistance to me.

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126 English translation between the lines of dialect, and adding notes in explanation of anything that was obscure. I thus have a large collection of texts in the dialect spoken at Kurtatchi, which proved of the greatest service to me in studying the language for practical use in the field, and could, if required, be utilised for comparative purposes. I [197] am not concerned with linguistic problems in the present paper, but I may perhaps mention that while the vocabulary of the Kurtatchi dialect differs widely from that of Petats, there are certain similarities of construction, both being of Melanesian stock. Unfortunately, every small group of villages has a dialect of its own, so that whenever I worked outside the immediate vicinity of my own village I was obliged to have recourse to Pidgin English again.

128 I have endeavoured to make the translation as literal as 198 possible, even to the point of crudeness, whether I have translated from the native dialect or from Pidgin English. Perhaps it is worth while to point out that Pidgin English, as used in that portion of the South Sea Islands with which I am acquainted, makes frequent use of constructions based on those of native speech, and is capable, within certain limitations, of representing the original with reasonable accuracy both as to form and spirit. It is therefore a not altogether inefficient medium in which to work. The style of the stories differs somewhat with different narrators, some joining their sentences more freely than others, and some showing great fondness for the repetition of long or short passages, a device common to tellers of folk-tales among all peoples.

121 There can be no question that the collecting of such stories is a very valuable tool in the hands of the field worker. Apart from the interest shown by the natives in the telling of them, and their value as linguistic material, the subject matter often suggested to me lines of enquiry which, when followed up, either at the conclusion of the story or at a more convenient season, as circumstances

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In view of the anthropological importance of this connection between men and animals, I will add another illustration, this time dealing with a snake. 539 825

The Snakes and their Victim.

The men went to dam the river (in order to fish). One man asked them: "Where are you going?" The men said: "We are going to dam the river. What about you, are you going to stay here?" No, I will go with you. You wait for me, I will go and get my net." They all went. One man went and hung up all his taro on the branch of a tree. They all made a dam across the river. The river dried up. They all took their nets and caught all the fish. They finished catching fish. They said they would go back to the village. The man thought he would go and get his taro. He looked for it, it was all gone. He thought the other men had eaten it. He called the men in vain, they had not eaten it. A spirit had eaten it, the spirit belonging to this river.[8] The name of the river is Tikiwir, (it is near Timputs). He asked all the men, they said: "No, we did not eat your taro. You be careful to ask all the men." He asked all the men. All the men said together: "No, we did not eat it." All the men went to the village. The man took all his fish, he gave it to his brother, he said to him: "Brother, give all my fish to my wife, go fast to the village." They all went to the village. This man did not go. He did not stay for nothing, the spirit held him fast.

He talked to his brother: "You go first, I will get some areca nut for us both." Then he went, he climbed up an areca palm belonging to the spirit. He climbed, he wanted to get some areca nut. The spirit went up behind him, up

[8] I have this story in Pidgin English only, so I cannot give the native word here translated "spirit". The Pidgin English word used is "masalai" which usually means a super-natural being other than a spirit of a dead person, the Pidgin English word for which is generally *tambaran*. But sometimes the two seem to be used interchangeably.

[198]